



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Office of Public Affairs, 377th Air Base Wing, 2000 Wyoming Blvd. S.E.
Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico 87117-5606, (505) 846-5991. DSN 246-5991

Re-enlistment Gives Airman New Start

By Tech. Sgt. William M. Rhodes
377 Air Base Wing Public Affairs

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — In 1976 a terrible earthquake devastated much of Guatemala City, Guatemala. Thousands died, and many families left the region.

In 1996 at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, a victim of that tragedy was preparing for two separate events, one of which would change his destiny. For this 21-year-old Air Force Security Police specialist, preparing for Peacekeeper Challenge '96 would become a footnote to what he says, "was one of the most important decisions he's made."

Twenty years prior his family moved to the United States and Miguel Ortega-Llarena began a new life in California. At age 16, his parents moved back to Guatemala and gave him permission to stay behind and finish school. They also left one decision for his future in his hands.

"My parents told me it was up to me if I wanted to become a citizen or not," Ortega said. "Following high school I enlisted in the Air Force."

It's that decision which guided the soft spoken airman to become a U.S. Citizen just two week prior to the Peacekeeper Challenge competition.

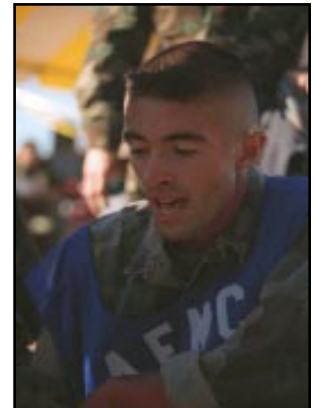
"I wanted to stay in and to do that I had to become a citizen to re-enlist," he added. "There were hundreds of people being inducted the day I went. I felt really proud being one of two people in uniform there." (The other was a Marine.)

Following his induction, Ortega continued training for the 15th Peacekeeper Challenge held here from Sept. 16-21. Teams from 11 U.S. Air Force Major Commands and two Allied nations, Canada and Great Britain participated in the competition.

Originally designed to gauge the efficiency of multiple functions within the Air Force security police career field, including traffic accident investigations, crime scene investigation, military working dog, and information security, the competition has grown into a test for proficiency in combat related skills.

Peace Keeper Challenge is broken down into seven events: Obstacle course; Handgun; Machine Gun; Combat Rifle; Grenade Launcher; Defender Challenge; and the Chief of Staff's Challenge.

Ortega participated in five of the seven: Obstacle course, also known as Fitness Challenge; Defender Challenge, Combat Rifle, Handgun and the Chief of Staff's Challenge.



-More-

Ortega**2-2-2**

A member of the Air Force Materiel Command team, he was a member of the four-person team which took first place in the Fitness Challenge, a series of 21 obstacles within a mile and a half course. Individually, Ortega came in second at the Chief of Staff's Challenge. That event is the same course used for the Fitness Challenge but pits one team member from each participating team against the course and each other.

-30-

For more information, contact 1st Lt. Dave DuBois at (505) 846-5991 or DSN 246-5991.

